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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Consumer Advisory: Terry Goddard Warns of Tax Rebate Scam

(Phoenix, Ariz. - Feb. 11, 2008) Attorney General Terry Goddard today warned consumers about the latest solicitation scam stemming from the proposed Congressional economic stimulus package. Arizonans should use great caution if they receive phone calls or emails that claim to be related to government-issued tax rebates.

The mailing of tax-reporting forms on Jan. 31 marked the beginning of this year's tax season. Unfortunately, identity thieves often prey upon taxpayers' nervousness over the power of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to obtain their personal and financial information. Thieves then use this personal information to drain victims' bank accounts or obtain credit in their names.

This year's rebate scam follows the lines of a traditional phone solicitation fraud. The caller claims to be an IRS employee and tells consumers they are eligible for a tax-rebate check from the government. But to process that rebate, people are informed they need to provide personal banking information. If they refuse to give this information, they are told they will not receive the money.

An email version of this scam, also claiming to be from the IRS, encourages recipients to access a Web link or download and fill out an attached form to provide personal information. Often recipients are led to believe that failing to provide the information will knock them out of good standing with the IRS, prevent them from receiving their rebate or refund or even cause them to be audited. The attachments can also contain spyware that enables the thief to steal victims' personal and financial information.

The Attorney General's Office and the IRS encourage you to follow these guidelines to protect yourself from identity thieves during the tax season:

- The only IRS Web site is [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov), and all genuine IRS Web pages begin with <http://www.irs.gov/>. If you want to access the IRS via Internet, you should type this address into your browser. Do NOT follow links provided in an email.
- The IRS and the Arizona Department of Revenue do not send unsolicited tax-related emails to taxpayers and will never ask for personal information (such as Social Security, bank account or PIN numbers) via email. If you receive an email claiming to be from the IRS or Department of Revenue that asks for personal or tax-related information, you

should be highly skeptical. Suspicious tax-related emails can be forwarded to [phishing@irs.gov](mailto:phishing@irs.gov).

- As of this date, no legislation has been enacted to authorize the federal tax rebate or authorize the IRS to make payment of such a rebate.
- Be careful with all documents that contain personal financial or tax-related information. Scam artists are aware that mailboxes, home offices and even trash bins often contain sensitive documents during tax season. Make sure to collect your mail regularly, store all tax related documents in a safe place and shred all documents that contain personal financial information before throwing them away.

Attorney General Goddard offers the following tips for preventing identity theft year-round:

- Be wary of callers who insist on getting your personal information. If you are being pressured, hang up.
- Never give out personal information, such as your Social Security number, bank account numbers or credit card numbers, to anyone you do not know.
- Report any suspicious calls to the Attorney General's Office at 602-542-5763.

If you believe you have been a victim of fraud, please contact the Attorney General's Office in Phoenix at 602.542.5763; in Tucson at 520.628.6504; or outside the Phoenix and Tucson metro areas at 1.800.352.8431. To file a complaint in person, the Attorney General's Office has 36 satellite offices throughout Arizona with volunteers available to help. Locations and hours are posted on the Attorney General's Web site at [www.azag.gov](http://www.azag.gov). Please visit the Web site to sign up for scam alerts and weekly messages from Attorney General Goddard.

Individuals with tax-related questions can contact the IRS toll-free at 1-800-829-1040 or contact the Arizona Department of Revenue at 602 255-3381 or toll-free from 520 or 928 area code at 800 352-4090.

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